Kerala AW11
Nayar

794
795

/Information on Nayar "snake cults" has been filed in the following categories: snake shrines and temples--778; snakes as deities--776; general beliefs about snakes--825; the "snake cult" as a part of the general religious order of the Nayars--771; ceremonial practices associated with the "cult"--796./

613 621 427 566 in kind, from which was deducted a small proportion of the original cash sum. When the original sum had been exhausted the kanakkaran recommenced paying full rent, or renewed the sum, or else surrendered the land. It seems likely that these sums [19] of money were traditionally paid only on the succession to headship of a new janmi or a new kanakkaran on the death of the old, or at irregular intervals convenient to both parties. Both kanam and jenmam rights could be sold, but a kanakkaran could not be evicted without the consent of the local Nayar assembly. The system allowed of a certain degree of spatial mobility and of the periodic segmentation of the Nayar property-group, some branches of which might even move to another village if lands became short. On the whole, however, kanam tenures were of long duration, and a Nayar property-group might remain stable for several generations.

566 In addition to their role as tenants, members of the retainer subcastes had other economic and also ritual relations with their landlord. [794] They were called adiyar (servants) of their janmi and must attend and participate at his household ceremonies. Women of the retainer lin- [357] eages worked as house-servants of the janmi's family, while older Nayar men who had retired [427] from the army might be employed as bailiffs who collected the janmi's rents and organized the labour of his serfs.

564 794 In addition to the Nayars, members of certain other aristocratic castes were usually present in each village. These included the temple

servants, nowadays [20] collectively called Ambalavasis. The highest of these were the Chakkyars or reciters of Puranic stories, and the Pushpagans or flower-gatherers for temples. These two castes had a patrilineal descent-system of the same type as Nambudiris, and are said to have once been Nambudiris who were degraded for ritual offences. They ranked below Nambudiris and above Nayars and the matrilineal temple servant castes. These latter included Nambyars, a small caste whose work was to accompany Chakkyar recitations on a metal drum; Psharodis and Variyars, both of whom traditionally sweep the temple, clean temple vessels and make garlands for the idols; Puduvals or drummers on a drum called maddalam; and Marars or regular drummers on another drum called chenda.

The temple-servant castes were small and were chiefly congregated in villages owned by Nambudiri landlords or by large temples. Four main types of temple were owned by the higher castes of Malabar. First came large and wealthy temples owned and managed entirely by groups of Nambudiri landlords and dedicated to one of the orthodox Brahmanical male deities of India, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second came the private temple of each individual Nambudiri family in villages owned by Nambudiris; these were small replicas of the first type, dedicated to the same types of deities. Third came the large temples, one of which was associated with each royal and chiefly matrilineage. These were usually dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali, the Nayar goddess of war, small pox and the sort.

194 the Nayar goddess of war, smallpox and the
564 soil. Fourth came the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, one of which was found in each village or group of villages of the same subcaste where Nayar retainers were present.
[782] In the first two types of temples, animal sacrifice was forbidden; offerings were of flowers,
[793] fruits, incense and fire. The priests were either Nambudiri Brahmans or members of a lower landless caste called Embrandiri Brahmans who are immigrant from South Canara to the north. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which contained a temple of type (1), there was often no Nayar population at all: a group of lineages of one or more temple servant subcastes replaced them as retainers of the Nambudiris and as kanam tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of type (2), there would be one or two individual lineages of one or other temple servant caste, attached to the Nambudiri temple, but also a group of Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple. [22] In villages not headed by Nambudiri Brahmans, there might be only a Bhagavadi temple, managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar caste might also be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple servant castes did not work in village Bhagavadi temples. Similarly in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple owned by the ruling lineage, the temple servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars, but individuals of the

other temple servant castes might come from other villages to assist at special annual ceremonies. In royal and chiefly Bhagavadi temples the priest was usually a Nambudiri Brahman, though a Nayar shaman was attached to the temple and periodically became possessed by the goddess and declared her will to the people. In village Nayar Bhagavadi temples, the priest was either an Embrandiri Brahman hired by the Nayars, or a Nayar; there was in addition a Nayar shaman. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi temple were similar to those in a Nambudiri temple, but annual ceremonies involved animal sacrifice by Nayars, in which Brahmans and temple servants took no part. Consistent with these differences in ritual behaviour, Nambudiris and all temple servants were vegetarians; royal, chiefly and Nayar castes ate meat. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise almost identical in general culture to Nayars, and historically were probably once Nayars. Among temple ser vants, Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine or intermarry. They ranked roughly [23] parallel to the chiefs of districts (with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine) and above the retainer-Nayars, who might receive food from them but not give food to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servant castes and parallel to Nayars, with whom they had few social relations outside the temple, and did not interdine or intermarry.

Below all these aristocratic castes in ritual

564 rank came certain small castes of middle class,
•794 non-military Nayars whose work was connected with temples. Vattekads were oil-mongers for temples, Odatt Nayars, temple tile-makers; and Andura Nayars temple pot-makers. One Vattekad lineage was present in each village to supply oil to the temple; its members might receive good from all the higher castes but might not give to them. Often, the headman of the Vattekad lineage was also the shaman of the Na-
[791] yar Bhagavadi temple. Odatt and Andura Nayars were very small castes, usually with one lineage to about six villages.

564 Below the middle class Nayars in rank came three castes of servant-Nayars, also non-mili-
[764] tary: Chidigans or funeral priests of the higher matrilineal castes, Veluthedans or washermen
305 of all the castes above them; and Vilakkatara-
296 vans or barbers of all the castes above them. One lineage of each of these castes was usually present in each village. Chidigans ranked above barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank and would not interdine or intermarry.

[361] In each village, all of the castes so far mentioned (provided they were present) were called "high," "good" [24] or "clean" castes and lived in a separate portion of the village, each house in its own large garden, round the temples and the local janmi's house. Except for Nayar barbers and washermen, all might enter either Nambudiri or Nayar temples. Within this group,
[783] lower castes were forbidden to touch higher castes because of ritual pollution, but individuals of different castes might approach each other within a few feet,

000 ritual and other social cooperation.

613 (2) Ritual Cooperation in the Lineage
783 In addition to the joint performance of the pre-puberty marriage rite, members of a lineage were united in ritual observances at a birth or death. On each of these occasions, all members fell for fourteen days into a condition of ritual pollution (pula) in which they might not touch, eat with, or enter into the houses of other members of their caste, enter the public temples or bathing pools of the village, enter their own ancestor shrines, sacred snake groves or other sacred places of their lineage, or take part in everyday social life. This period of ritual pollution resembled one of temporary excommunication from caste, the only difference being that those ostracized were regarded by others with special friendliness rather than hostility. It effectively set apart the lineage as a solidary group at times of crisis in its history, and gave recognition to their joint concern with increase or decrease in their membership.

613 Lineage members were also united in worship
794 of the lineage goddess or dharma devi ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess, named differently in different lineages, is a species of the common Nayar goddess Bhagavadi, and in this context was probably though of as a primeval ancestress of the lineage, though I lack data definitely to indicate this. Her idol was housed in a small shrine in the precincts of the oldest ancestral house, or sometimes in the courtyard of the village temple. She was believed capable of

613 inflicting or witholding sickness and all types of
794 misfortune to the lineage, and, to ward off these, was propitiated with offerings of cooked food annually and in special emergencies on the advice of the astrologer as diviner. In particular, she 1/1
[842] had power to bless with fertility women of the lineage, and so was worshipped before a pre-puberty marriage rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl.

[778] Though not jointly owned by the lineage but rather by that branch of it which inherited the gardens on which they stood, the oldest ancestral house of the lineage, from which its forbears sprang, the original ancestor shrine in this house, and the sacred snake-grove in its [48] garden, were regarded with reverence by all lineage-members and stood as symbols of their unity. These are discussed below in connection with rites relating to the property-group.

613 (3) Fission and adoption in the Lineage
608 Since lineages were usually groups of actual
621 and not putative matrilineal kin, it was inevitable that (since the birthrate is not uniform throughout a population) while some might remain stable in numbers over generations, others would expand greatly, and others would decrease and become in danger of extinction. When great growth in numbers in a lineage took place, some segments appear even traditionally to have hived off to other villages occupied by their own subcaste where kanam paddy lands and janmam garden lands were available. Such a segment, on moving to a new village, was adopted as retainers

1/1 [the dharma devi, or lineage goddess---Analyst]

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 AWll Kerala AWll
Central Kerala Nayar

lages. The men were often clerks in the palaces. In Cochin, castes two and three were amalgamated and were called Swarupattil Sudra Nayars or "palace servants." 564

Fourth, a caste called Pallichan Nayars, both in Calicut and Cochin. Its members also were vassals in the villages of royalty, chiefs, and of the greater Brahmans. The men were often palanquin bearers as well as soldiers.

Fifth, a caste called Sudra Nayars in Calicut and Illath ("Brahman house") Sudras in Cochin. The members lived in villages owned by Brahman families or on the estates of Brahmanical temples.

The mutual ritual ranking of these five castes seems to have varied in different districts. In some districts they ranked in the order given, and men of a higher caste might marry women of a lower caste; the reverse was in theory forbidden. In other districts the castes seem to have disputed for precedence and not to have regularly intermarried. In most areas the five castes occupied different villages or different sections of large villages, seem to have had little communication in peacetime, and did not normally interdine. In war, however, soldiers of these different castes interdined freely and spent the night in each others' homes. It is possible that sexual restrictions between these castes were also relaxed in war, but this point is uncertain. 564 554 [628] [726]

In each village there were normally some four to seven matrilineages of the appropriate retainer caste. The separate households or property groups within each lineage had the hereditary right, granted by the king, to occupy stretches of garden land and to lease large plots of wet paddy land on long-term tenure from the village landlord. The tenure was called *kānam;* the tenant, *a kānakkaran.* In most villages the men of retainer lineages also owed military service to their landlord, ultimately on behalf of the king. (The military organization is discussed below.) Retainers were called *adiyar,* a word equivalent to "vassals," of their landlord. They participated in his household ceremonies and often waited upon him. Women of retainer lineages could be summoned as serving maids in the landlord's family; men, as bailiffs to collect the landlord's rents and organize the labor of his serfs. 621 613 564 566 471 427

The Temple-Servant Castes In addition to the Nayars, other aristocratic castes often lived in a village. These were the temple servants, nowadays collectively called Ambalavasis. They are relevant to our discussion because they sometimes married Nayar women. The highest of these castes were the Chakkyars (or reciters of Puranic stories) and the Pushpagans (or flower gatherers for temples), which had patrilineal descent systems of the same type as the Nambudiris. They 564 794

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

564 ranked below Nambudiris but above retainer Nayars and certain matri-
794 lineal temple-servant castes. The latter included Nambyars, Puduvals, and Marars, three castes of drummers, and Psharodis and Variyars, castes of temple stewards.

564 The temple-servant castes were small and lived chiefly in villages
794 owned by Nambudiri Brahmans or in sankētams. Four types of temples were distinguishable among the higher castes. First were the large temples of the sankētams, whose estates were managed by Nambudiris. They were dedicated to all-India, Puranic deities, usually Siva or Vishnu. Second, were the private temples of individual Nambudiri families in villages owned by Nambudiris, which were small replicas of the first type. Third were the private temples of royal and chiefly matrilineages, dedicated to Bhagavadi or Bhadrakali—the Nayar goddess of war, epidemic, land, and fertility. Fourth were the smaller Bhagavadi temples of village Nayars, each collectively managed by an assembly of Nayar retainers of one or more villages.

In the first two types of temple animal sacrifice was forbidden.
[782] Offerings were of fruit, flowers, incense, and fire. The priests were
[793] low-ranking Nambudiri Brahmans. Nayars might enter the outer courtyards of such temples but might not perform rites there. In a village which formed part of a sankētam there was sometimes no Nayar population at all; a group of lineages of one or more temple-servant castes replaced them as retainers of the Brahmans and as permanent tenants. In Nambudiri villages containing a temple of the
[613] second type, one or two lineages of some temple-servant caste would be attached to the temple, but there would invariably also be a group of Sudra Nayar retainers with their own Bhagavadi temple.

564 In villages under a Nayar headman there might be only one Bhaga-
794 vadi temple managed collectively by Nayars. One lineage of the Marar
613 caste might be present to drum in the temple, but the other temple-servant castes did not work in Nayar village temples. Similarly, in a royal or chiefly village containing a large Bhagavadi temple of the ruling lineage, the temple-servant castes might be absent except for one lineage of Marars. Persons of other temple-servant castes might however come from nearby villages to assist at special ceremonies.

794 In Bhagavadi temples the regular priest was usually of a special low
564 subdivision of Nambudiris (Adigals). In addition a Nayar shaman,
[793] attached to the temple, periodically became possessed by the goddess
791 and declared her will to the people. Daily rites in the Bhagavadi
[782] temple were similar to those in a Brahman temple, but annual festi-

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

vals involved animal sacrifice by Nayars in which Brahmans and temple servants took no part.

Consistent with these differences in ritual practice, Nambudiris and temple servants were vegetarians and followed rules of non-violence. Royals, chiefs, and Nayar retainers were warriors and until modern times usually ate meat and drank liquor. The matrilineal castes of temple servants were otherwise culturally similar to Nayars, with whom they probably had a common origin.

Below the Chakkyars and the Pushpagans, the Nambyars, Psharodis, Variyars, and Puduvals disputed for ritual rank and would not interdine. These castes ranked roughly parallel to the district chiefs, with whom they had few social relations and did not interdine. They ranked above the retainer Nayars, who might receive food from them but might not give to them. Marars ranked below the other temple servants and parallel to retainer Nayars, with whom, however, they had few social relations outside the temple and did not interdine.

The Nayar Menials in Temples Below all these aristocratic castes came certain small matrilineal castes of menial, non-military Nayars whose work was largely connected with temples. Vattekad Nayars were oilmongers; Odatt Nayars, tile makers; Andura Nayars, temple potters. One Vattekad lineage was present in every village to supply oil for temple lamps. Often the headman of the Vattekad lineage was the shaman of the Nayar Bhagavadi temple. Vattekad Nayars also performed household tasks for Kiriattil Nayar village headmen, which ordinary Kiriattil Nayars were too proud to do. Odatt and Andura Nayars were very small castes,[3] and one lineage might serve six or eight villages.

The Nayar Servant Castes Below the temple menials came three matrilineal castes of servant Nayars with "degrading" occupations. Chidigans (called Attikurssis in the Calicut kingdom) were funeral priests of the higher matrilineal castes. Veluttedans were washermen of all the castes above them and Vilakkataravans were barbers of all the castes above them. One lineage of each was usually present in a village. Funeral priests ranked above barbers and washermen, who disputed for rank and would not interdine.

Social Relations among the Higher Castes The castes so far men-

[3] The kings permitted only Brahmans, royalty, and the greater chiefs to roof their houses and temples with tiles. Tile making was therefore a minor craft, and temple pottery was of superior quality to that used by commoners. The ordinary polluting caste of potters, Kumbarans, camped outside villages and exchanged their wares for grain.

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A Wll Kerala A Wll
Central Kerala Nayar

564 613

Each Nayar chiefly lineage, like royalty, normally counted itself a separate caste and married only hypergamously. Women of chiefly lineages married the royals or feudatory royals to whom their lineages were immediately subordinate, or wealthy Nambudiris, usually of their own district. Men of chiefly lineages married women of village headmen's lineages within their district, or women of retainer Nayar lineages, usually in their own villages.

Village headmen's lineages occasionally contracted marriages reciprocally with other village headmen's lineages of the chiefdom which had originally sprung from the same retainer caste. They also provided wives for chiefs and Brahmans and husbands for retainer women, usually of their own villages. [622]

564 794 613

Among temple servants, Nayar retainers, and Nayar temple menials the majority of marriages were between persons of the same caste. A few women in the Psharodi, Variyar, Poduval, and Nambyar castes married Nambudiris, especially those whose families managed the temples where they worked. A few such women also married men of the Chakkyar and Pushpagan castes, which had descent systems like that of the Nambudiris. A few men of these matrilineal temple-servant castes married women of Nayar retainer and Nayar temple-menial castes in the villages of their work. Nayar women were particularly convenient partners for temple servants and Nambudiri temple priests because of the latters' spatial distribution. Often a temple-servant lineage or a Brahman priestly family held the hereditary right of service in six or eight small temples in villages up to ten miles away. One man of the lineage might spend much of his life working away from home in one of the more distant temples. He would live on food previously offered to the deity, occupy a room attached to the temple kitchen, bathe in the temple bathing pool, and visit a local Nayar wife at nights, returning home for life crises and festivals.

564

Women of the retainer Nayar castes might receive husbands from all the castes above them. Sudra Nayar women living in Brahman-owned villages or on the estates of large temples were the most likely to form links with Brahmans and temple servants; Charna Nayars and Pallichans, with royalty or chiefs; and Kiriattil women, with village headmen. Thus hypergamous unions entered into by retainer Nayars in general followed the main lines of lord-vassal relationships. However, "odd" marriages with individuals of any higher rank in nearby villages were permitted.

Because the higher castes were much smaller than they were, the Nayar retainers probably gave less than 10 per cent of their women

2:Gough E-4, 5 (1947-1949)1961 A W11 Kerala A W11
Central Kerala Nayar

formal recognition that the bereaved lineage, freed from its death pollution, had been received back into the normal social life of the caste.

Lineage members were also united in worship of their lineage goddess or *dharma devi* ("goddess of moral law"). This goddess, named differently in different lineages, was a species of the common Nayar goddess Bhagavadi. Her idol was housed in a small shrine near the oldest ancestral house or sometimes in the courtyard of the village temple. She was believed capable of inflicting or withholding sickness and all types of misfortune. To ward them off, members propitiated her with offerings of cooked food every year. The astrologer might also advise an emergency propitiation. She had the power to bless women of the lineage with fertility. On this account she was worshipped before a tāli rite and also at the first menstruation ceremonies of a girl. In a somewhat vague sense, moreover, lineage members appear to have felt themselves collectively responsible to the goddess for sins or ritual lapses on the part of one of them. It was believed that if any member failed to observe the religious laws of caste, to perform household duties correctly, or to revere the goddess, she might bring sickness or misfortune upon the lineage as a whole.

In spite of this sense of collective moral responsibility, the evidence is unclear as to whether the lineage as a whole was held legally responsible for any of its member's acts. It is true that the enangar were the legal representatives of the local caste unit in its relations with the lineage. This inter-lineage relationship was hereditary and obligatory. It could not be entered into or permanently broken without the consent of the assembly and the chief of the district. If, moreover, an individual infringed a religious law of the caste, it was the duty of his lineage's enangar to summon a caste assembly to judge and punish the offense. Crimes, which were also sins, against caste law included incest within the lineage; dining or sex relations with prohibited lower-caste persons; failure to perform the marriage rite of a girl before she reached puberty; failure to observe pollution at the birth or death of a lineage member or (on the part of an individual woman) during menstruation; failure to pay dues in kind to the Nayar temple of the neighborhood. On being apprized of an offense, the assembly's first recourse was temporarily to ostracize the offender's household from the caste community. Ostracism meant that the offenders might not enter the temple, bathe in public bathing pools, enter the houses of other Nayars, employ the village servant

4:Gough E-5 (1947-1949, 1952)1958 AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

No clear distinction is made between alien ghosts and minor malevolent deities, or demons, which are also sometimes called *pretams* in Cochin. Some demons are found throughout Malabar. Chief of these is Kuttichāttan, a spirit capable of all kinds of poltergeist activities. Sometimes, on the advice of an astrologer, a *taravād* privately sets up a shrine to Kuttichāttan and arranges for his annual propitiation by a low caste person in the same manner as an alien ghost. Often, indeed, local myths of particular Kuttichāttans suggest that they have been derived from alien ghosts, whose legends became fancifully embroidered with miraculous elements. The story of one Kuttichāttan, in this case enshrined in a Nambūdiri Brahman garden and propitiated by a washerman, will illustrate this process. The god was said to have been born from a sacrificial fire during ancestral ceremonies in a Brahman house. The Brahman house-owner brought him up, and when he was adult sent him to graze cattle as a serf. One day the Brahman's red-horned bull was missing, and the serf admitted that he had killed and eaten it. The Brahman tied him to the rafters of the cowshed and had him beaten to the point of death. Afterwards, the serf turned into a Kuttichāttan and disappeared, but hovered above the Nambūdiri household bringing misfortune until a shrine was set up for him. Educated Nāyar informants surmised that the spirit had originally been that of an executed serf, later glorified by his propitiants as Kuttichāttan. Similarly, Kadangōtt Makkam, whose story was related above, is spoken of as a form of Bhagavadi in some *taravāds* where she is propitiated.

I have so far mentioned the kinds of alien ghosts which may be attached to individual *taravāds* in Cochin. In fact, however, cults of spirits and deities of the village are grander and more numerous in Cochin than are those of the *taravād*. This parallels the fact that the Cochin village was traditionally highly centralized as a unit of local government. In this area, the temple of the village goddess Bhagavadi is managed either by a Nāyar village headman's lineage or collectively by a village community of commoner Nāyars. Only the Nāyars and castes above them might traditionally enter the temple, but all castes owed allegiance to the deity and took part in her annual festival. The lowest castes of former serfs, and some other polluting castes such as washermen, took part in the festival through the medium of one or more minor malevolent deities or particularly important local ghosts which occupied small shrines at a distance from the main temple. Such spirits were thought of as servants of the goddess, and at her will could "sow the seeds" of smallpox or other misfortunes in the village. To avert such misfortune not only must the Nāyars and other high castes propitiate the goddess herself, but the lower castes must also assemble, bringing imitation bullocks and horses—the vehicles of the deity's demon servants—and make offerings to these demons. Selected persons from these lower castes became possessed by the village ghosts or demons and, in masked dances, made oracular pronouncements both to their own and the higher castes. During the festival, and for several weeks before it, Nāyar households must also entertain these shamans privately in the courtyards of their houses and make gifts of grain to them which warded off the demons' wrath.

In Kottayam, the village was traditionally less centralized. Each Nāyar *taravād* was an independent landowning body owing only tenuous allegiance to a chief. Cults of deities and ghosts associated with particular *taravāds* are therefore more prominent than are those of village temples, and it is in the former rather than the latter that ritual cooperation between high and low castes is most prominent. Whereas a Cochin

6:Fawcett G-5 (ca. 1900)1915
AWll Kerala AWll
Nayar

Men and women who have taken part in the festival are considered to have undergone spiritual purification each in his or her own caste, and to have marked their position in it as well as in the social scale.

Beyond noting that the weirdness of the human tumult busy in its religious effusion is on the last night enhanced by fireworks, mere description of the scene of the festival will not be attempted, and such charming adjuncts of it as the gallery of pretty Nâyar women looking on from the garden fence at the seething procession in the lane below must be left to the imagination for the present, while we must be content with such accuracy as we may attain on all points: neither fancy nor beauty shall allure us from the dull path of precision, for the mere features of the ceremonial are one real concern.

It will have been noticed that the Nambûtiris hold aloof from the festival: they purify the temple before and after, but no more.

The importance attached to the various offices of those who are attached to the temple by however slender a thread, was illustrated by a rather amusing squabble between two of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), an uncle and nephew, as to which of them should receive the silver umbrella from the temple and bear it to the house of the goldsmith to be repaired. How the squabble arose, how indeed there could have arisen a squabble on such a point as seniority between an uncle and a nephew amongst Mukkuvans, whose descent is reckoned from father to son, I know not, but during the festival one of them made a rapid journey to the Zamorin (about 50 miles distant), paid some fees and established himself as the senior who had the right to carry the umbrella. There are points of resemblance between this festival and the village festival of Southern India where the buffalo "devoted" to the goddess of the village is sacrificed, where there is the slaughter of the lamb by the strong teeth of a man, the dressing up in leaves, the man naked and blindfolded going round outside the village while cooked rice and blood are scattered wide, the blindfolded man falling senseless before the goddess at the end of it.*

There are many festivals in Malabar description of which would be very interesting, but information in detail is wanting in my notes, so I must perforce rest content with what has been related of the festival at the

* Described at length by me in the "Journal of the Anthropological Society of Bombay" some eight years ago.

He had criminal and civil jurisdiction and the right to claim military service from the Nāyars under him. The *Nadu Vazhis* kept a local force varying between five hundred and one thousand men, which they were obliged to put into the field at the command of their Rajah. The *Nadu Vazhis* were kept under control by the Rajah when he was able to do so. But in any case they were bound to fight for him. Below these *Nadu Vazhis* were *Desa Vazhis* (lords of the Manor). They had the right of keeping a *Kalari* or a military academy. In each village there was one *Desa Vazhi* (sometimes more), who was called master (*Asān*) by the Nāyars. He was their military preceptor in peace time and their leader in war time.

The principal business of the *Desa Vazhi* was to train the young men of *Desa* in his *Kalari*. All Nāyar boys after twelve were supposed to attend the *Kalari* and learn boxing, fencing, sword play, military formation, and the ordinary rules of warfare. For such training the *Desa Vazhi* was not paid. After eighteen the boys were not supposed to attend the *Kalari*, but were required to be ready to start for war at a day's notice.

The *Kalaris* are still in existence. Even now the Nāyar young men who do not go to English schools get some sort of a training with imitation swords and shields, because swords are prohibited by the Arms Act. In certain families one male member has to be proficient in this art so as to be able to teach the others. The *Kalaris*, though now visited by people only for the extreme beauty of their architecture, are still used by the Nāyars of the *Desas* as places of worship.

On the festival days in the village temple the Nāyars, who have been thus trained, even now hold a review in martial array (*vēla*). In Trivandrum, which is the capital of the Maharajah of Travancore, this feature is very prominent. In other places there are still *Patayanis* (*Pata*=war, *ani*=to get ready). All the Nāyars of the surrounding districts assemble, and the ceremonies which in former days stood for military manœuvres are held with great enthusiasm.

The centre of all the martial and, consequently, of the social life of the Nāyars is, therefore, the *Desa*. In each village there is a temple owned by the community. The temple is generally self-supporting, and occasionally very rich. The temple authorities are appointed by the village. The power is generally vested in the *Pramanis*, or the chief men. In each village there are certain families who have the right of being consulted in all matters connected with it. The head of these *Pramanis* is the Lord of the Manor.

In describing the organization of the village, it is better to take one practical example which is typical. Kavalam is such a village. I shall, therefore, confine myself to the description of the organization of that village.

The village is supposed to consist of one hundred and fifty houses. This is the traditional number, but at least fifty of these have emigrated. But though they live in other parts of the country they are still considered to belong to this organization. In all the ceremonies that require the sanction of the village the emigrant,

[i.e., The Nadu Vazhi -- Analyst]

796 of drums, and cannonade of the little mortars. All those who are present are supposed to be fed from the temple. [564] There is a large crowd. On the morning of the fifth day, a man of the washerman (Vannān) caste will [203] announce to the neighbours by beat of tom-tom that [788] there will be a procession of Bhagavati issuing from the gates of the temple, and passing round about. Like all 794 those who are in any way connected with the temple, 796 this man's office is hereditary, and he lives to a small 564 extent on the bounty of the temple, *i.e.*, he holds a little [428] land on nominal terms from the temple property, in [425] consideration for which he must fulfil certain requirements for the temple, as on occasions of festivals. His office also invests him with certain rights in the community. In the afternoon of the fifth day, the Vannān and a Manūtan, the one following the other, bring two umbrellas to the temple; the former bringing one of cloth, and the latter one of cadjan (palm leaves). I am not sure whether the cloth umbrella has been in the possession of the Vannān, but think it has. At all events, when he brings it to the temple, it is in thorough repair—a condition for which he is responsible. The cadjan umbrella is a new one. Following these two as they walk solemnly, each with his umbrella, is a large crowd. There are processions of Bhagavati on the elephant encircling the temple thrice in the morning, at noon, and at night. [326] Early on the sixth day, the headman of the Mukkuvans (fishermen), who by virtue of his headship is called the Arayan, together with the blacksmith and the goldsmith, comes to the temple followed by a crowd, but accompanied by no orchestra of drums. To the Arayan is given half a sack of rice for himself and his followers. A silver umbrella belonging to the temple is handed over to him, to be used when

13:Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

he comes to the temple again in the evening. To the blacksmith is given the temple sword. The goldsmith receives the silver umbrella from the Arayan, and executes any repairs that may be needful, and, in like manner, the blacksmith looks to the sword. In the afternoon, the headman of the Tiyans, called the Tandān, comes to the temple followed by two of his castemen carrying slung on a pole over their shoulders three bunches of young cocoanuts—an appropriate offering, the Tiyans being those whose ordinary profession is climbing the cocoanut palm, drawing the toddy, securing the cocoanuts, etc. This time there will be loud drumming, and a large crowd with the Tandān, and in front of him are men dancing, imitating sword play with sticks and shields, clanging the shields, pulling at bows as if firing off imaginary arrows, the while shouting and yelling madly. Then come the blacksmith and the goldsmith with the sword. Following comes the Arayan with the silver umbrella to the accompaniment of very noisy drumming, in great state under a canopy of red cloth held lengthways by two men, one before, the other behind. The procession of Bhagavati continues throughout the night, and ceases at daybreak. These six days of the festival are called Vilākku. A word about the drumming. The number of instrumentalists increases as the festival goes on, and on the last day I counted fifty, all Nāyars. The instruments were the ordinary tom-tom, a skin stretched tight over one side of a circular wooden band, about 1½ feet in diameter and 2 or 3 inches in width, and the common long drum much narrower at the ends than in the middle; and there were (I think) a few of those narrow in the middle, something like an hour-glass cut short at both ends. They are beaten with curved drum sticks, thicker at the end held in the hand.

796
794
564
[326]
[482]
[782]
[326]
796
534

13;Thurston & Rangachari E-4, 5 (no date) 1909
AW11 Kerala AW11
Nayar

534
796
[533] The accuracy with which they were played on, never a wrong note although the rhythm was changed perpetually, was truly amazing. And the crescendo and diminuendo, from a perfect fury of wildness to the gentlest pianissimo, was equally astonishing, especially when we consider the fact that there was no visible leader of this strange orchestra. Early on the seventh and last day, when the morning procession is over, there comes to the temple a man of the Pānan caste (umbrella-makers and devil-dancers). He carries a small cadjan umbrella which he has made himself, adorned all round the edges with a fringe of the young leaves of the cocoanut palm. His approach is heralded and noised just as in the case of the others on the previous day. The umbrella should have a long handle, and, with it in his hand, he performs a dance before the temple. The temple is situated within a hollow square enclosure, which none in caste below the Nāyar is permitted to enter. To the north, south, east, and west, there is a level entrance into the hollow square, and beyond this entrance no man of inferior caste may go. The Pānan receives about 10 lbs. of raw rice for his performance. In the afternoon, a small crowd of Vettuvars come to the temple, carrying with them swords, and about ten small baskets made of cocoanut palm leaves, containing salt. These baskets are carried slung on a pole. The use of salt here is obscure.* I remember a case of a Nāyar's house having been plundered, the idol knocked down, and salt put in the place where it should have stood. The act was looked on as most insulting. The Vettuvans dance and shout in much excitement, cutting their heads with their own swords in their frenzy. Some

796
794
564
[293]
[422]
[685]
[574]
[786]

* The Vettuvans were once salt-makers.

of them represent devils or some kind of inferior evil spirits, and dance madly under the influence of the spirits which they represent. Then comes the Arayan as on the previous day with his little procession, and lastly comes the blacksmith with the sword. The procession in the evening is a great affair. Eight elephants, which kept line beautifully, took part in it when I witnessed it. One of them, very handsomely caparisoned, had on its back a priest (Mūssad) carrying a sword smothered in garlands of red flowers representing the goddess. The elephant bearing the priest is bedizened on the forehead with two golden discs, one on each side of the forehead, and over the centre of the forehead hangs a long golden ornament. These discs on the elephant's forehead are common in Malabar in affairs of ceremony. The Māppilla poets are very fond of comparing a beautiful girl's breasts to these cup-like discs. The elephant bears other jewels, and over his back is a large canopy-like red cloth richly wrought. Before the elephant walked a Nāyar carrying in his right hand in front of him a sword of the kind called nāndakam smeared with white (probably sandal) paste. To its edge, at intervals of a few inches, are fastened tiny bells, so that, when it is shaken, there is a general jingle. Just before the procession begins, there is something for the Tiyans to do. Four men of this caste having with them pūkalasams (flower kalasams), and five having jannakalasams, run along the west, north, and east sides of the temple outside the enclosure, shouting and making a noise more like the barking of dogs than anything else. The kalasams contain arrack (liquor), which is given to the temple to be used in the ceremonies. Members of certain families only are allowed to perform in this business, and for what they do each

564
794

796 man receives five edangālis of rice from the temple, and
[465] a small piece of the flesh of the goat which is sacrificed later. These nine men eat only once a day during the
[834] festival; they do no work, remaining quietly at home
[841] unless when at the temple; they cannot approach any one of caste lower than their own; they cannot cohabit with women; and they cannot see a woman in menstruation during these days. A crowd of Tiyans join more or less in this, rushing about and barking like dogs, making a hideous noise. They too have kalasams, and, when they are tired of rushing and barking, they drink the arrack in them. These men are always under a vow.
[782] In doing what they do, they fulfil their vow for the benefit they have already received from the goddess—
796 cure from sickness as a rule. To the west of the
564 temple is a circular pit—it was called the fire-pit, but there was no fire in it—and this pit all the Tiyan women of the neighbourhood circumambulate, passing from west round by north, three times, holding on the head a pewter plate, on which are a little rice, bits of plantain leaves and cocoanut, and a burning wick. As each woman completes her third round, she stands for a moment at the western side, facing east, and throws the
[782] contents of the plate into the pit. She then goes to the western gate of the enclosure, and puts down her plate for an instant while she makes profound salaam to the
796 goddess ere going away. Now the procession starts
776 out from the temple, issuing from the northern gate,
788 and for a moment confronts a being so strange that he demands description. Of the many familiar demons of the Malayālis, the two most intimate are Kuttichchāttan and Gulikan, who are supposed to have assisted Kāli (who is scarcely the Kāli of Brāhmanism) in overcoming the Āsura, and on the occasion of this festival these

796 [787] in a sort of swoon, and everyone, excepting only the priests and temple servants, leaves the place as quickly as possible. The sheds which have been erected for 796 782 temporary habitation around the temple will be quickly demolished, and search will be made round about to make sure that no one remains near while the mystic rite of sacrifice is about to be done. When the whole place has been cleared, the four owners of the temple, who have stayed, hand over each a goat with a rope tied round its neck to the chief priest, and, as soon as they [793] have done so, they depart. There will remain now in the [534] temple three Mūssads, one drummer (Marayar), and two [794] temple servants. The reason for all this secrecy seems to lie in objection to let it be known generally that any sacrifice is done. I was told again and again that there 796 was no such thing. It is a mystic secret. The Mūssad 789 priests repeat mantrams over the goats for an hour as a 782 preliminary to the sacrifice. Then the chief priest dons 793 a red silk cloth, and takes in his hand a chopper-like sword in shape something like a small bill-hook, while the goats are taken to a certain room within the temple. This room is rather a passage than a room, as there are to it but two walls running north and south. The goats are made to stand in turn in the middle of this room, facing to the south. The chief priest stands to the east of the goat, facing west, as he cuts off its head with the chopper. He never ceases his mantrams, and the goats never flinch—the effect of the mantrams. Several cocks are then sacrificed in the same place, and over the carcasses of goats and cocks there is sprinkled charcoal powder mixed in water (karutta gurusi) and saffron (turmeric) powder and lime-water (chukanna gurusi), the flow of mantrams never ceasing the while. The three Mūssads only see the sacrifice—a part of the rite which

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

796 beat the drums according to their 'science' for two or three hours. The figure of the God or Goddess is taken on the back of the middle elephant in the row. There is a display of fireworks at night.

794 A few temples in the village are managed by private people or Janmis, usually Nambudri Brahmans. Such temples have landed property managed by these Janmis who generally make use of the profits. Recently the Government has been trying to encroach upon the temple properties in its capacity of *melkoyma*; this is very much resented by the Nambudri Jánmis.

The common people as a rule have no part or lot in temple management or expenditure.

426 *State loans.*—Only one person in the village has borrowed from the Government a loan of Rs. 400 to be paid back in ten instalments of Rs. 40 each with interest at 5 per cent. The small landholders do not approach the Government for help; the mediocre landholders rent their land to others; while the few big ones have money of their own if they want to make any improvement. The fact is that agriculture is routine work with many people; no permanent improvements are thought of by the majority.

164 *Sanitary condition.*—Plague and tuberculosis are not heard of. Malaria only affects those who resort for agricultural purposes to the foot of the hills four or five miles east from the village. Attacks of cholera frequently occur among the local Muhammadans, who are as a rule quite insanitary, poor, living in low and ill-ventilated thatched huts or hovels; one is sick of the stinking smell when one approaches their huts. The local Christians, though equally poor, are better in this respect. The houses of most of the Brahmans and the majority of the Nayars are decent. The hovels of the lower castes and working men again are poor and insanitary. [361] As the houses are not built in rows, but separate, each having a compound big or small, epidemic diseases such as small-pox when they come at all are easily avoided. But the case is different in the quarters of the Muhammadans and Christians, who build their houses in streets.

The chief endemic diseases are fever, rheumatism, attacks of bile.

759 There are plenty of snakes in the village everywhere. One sometimes hears of deaths caused by snake-bites. There are however a few who pretend to cure snake-bites by incantations aided by medicines.

There is a Government free dispensary established in the 'town' where the Apothecary is a Sub-Assistant Surgeon. But most people resort to native (ayurvedic) physicians or vaidyans. Ayurveda, or the Hindu science of medicine, makes use of vegetable drugs both in the raw and dried state. The physician comes to your house and prescribes a certain mixture according to the directions laid down in his code which he has committed to memory in the form of verses. The drugs can be got from the market, or from a neighbouring hill, or even from one's own compound.

This science is handed down from father to son in certain families in Malabar who form even now some of the most distinguished native physicians in Malabar. Even in a petty village

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

426 money-lenders is absorbed in no time. In the last five years the number of money-lending shops has doubled and their funds invested by this means have trebled. There is yet a demand for money which is unsatisfied.

Another method of supporting, as it were, the poor, is to lend the seed for sowing on the promise that for every 100 measures lent they will return after the first crop, i.e., after four months from the time of lending, 120 or 130 measures. This means an interest of 60 per cent per annum. The cultivators do not as a rule save their own seed, because when they have no means of living they natually use their seed for food. I am told this is the case with every paddy cultivator excepting the three rich agriculturists who are landowners. It must be confessed here that without such borrowing the cultivation itself could not at present be carried on.

The village is free from padials. The debtors only pay interest, but in the Palghat taluk the system of padials survives.

The causes of indebtedness are not far to seek. Economic backwardness is the primary cause. Waste of money on drink and evil habits is not uncommon. In some cases debt is due to ambi- [585] tious schemes which fail. Excessive display in marriage is not common in Malabar as in eastern districts. Non-Brahmans, especially the castes below the Nayars, pay only Rs. 20 or Rs. 30, according to their means, to the bridegroom, and sometimes not even that. Another Rs. 25 will raise a marriage above the ordinary level. Taking into account that a marriage will be performed in a family only once in five or six years this expenditure of Rs. 50 or so cannot be deemed great.

The ordinary labourers, who number about 500, maintain themselves by their daily work and they are never in debt. It is the agricultural classes and those who are engaged in petty trade that [421] are in debt. The only asset of the tenants is that they have to pay as advance one year's rent to the landowners and they receive for the advance 6 per cent interest. Even this is paid in some cases by borrowing.

There is no co-operative credit society in the village.

476 *Communal life.*—The Brahmans of this village have formed
● 794 themselves into a society for mutual aid and convenience. This organization of the society is on the model of the old village republics. It exists for social purposes only. Two persons are elected biennially to look after the affairs and the income of the society. Every house is represented by its head in the village assembly and that assembly elects the persons. The sources of income to the society are—

(1) the interest on the already existing property which is about Rs. 3,000;

(2) for all social functions such as marriage, etc., the society as a whole has a claim for a fixed sum. The total income from these two sources may be estimated at Rs. 350.

The duty of the society is to appoint the village priest, village barber, village trumpeter and other persons essential for the performance of social or religious functions.

The whole income is spent on the worship of God. The particular ways in which it should be spent have been fixed long ago, and comprise a special feast for the Brahmans once a year, provision of a burial-ground and other public and necessary places

31: Slater S-5 (1916-1917) 1918 AWI India
Kerala AWII

for Brahmans as a whole, and the performance of *puja* during one month in a year. 476

The two elected administrators spend the money as explained above, keep the accounts, and are responsible for the whole income. This organization is seen throughout the Brahman community in Malabar. It may be regarded as a survival of the village communal organization, the political functions of which disappeared with the advent of British rule. 794

The lower classes have appointed a family to settle caste questions and questions of excommunication, adultery, etc., and this family has been exercising this power from time immemorial. The family still holds the power and the verdict which the headman of the family pronounces about such questions is tacitly accepted by all. 692

Religious festivals are performed by the temple, and the temple *in practice* belongs to the Zamorin. It is managed by the Court of Wards at the present time, along with the Zamorin's estate. The income of the temple is the offerings of the devotees who chiefly come from distant places. The festivals which the temple performs will in a year cost more than Rs. 2,000. In addition offerings to the temple from the village itself will amount to more than Rs. 3,000. 794

The above statements of indebtedness, communal income, etc., are based on careful inquiry with well-known persons and the village munsif, and are given in round numbers as accurately as possible.

Sanitary condition.—Malaria, plague, cholera, smallpox and consumption are absent from the village. 164

The ordinary diseases of the village are fever, dysentery, elephantiasis and such like diseases. Infantile mortality is high. Out of 156 deaths 87 are infant deaths. The deaths are high among the poor, particularly the Hindu poor. It may be people cannot afford to bring up their children decently. The mothers must work for the maintenance of the family before many days have passed after child-birth. I know of a Tiyya family in which seven out of eleven children born died before they were three years old. Moreover they cannot afford medical help and they implore God to help them and resort to quack doctors. The prevalence of early marriage may be cited as one of the causes for physical deterioration. But the most potent cause especially in the case of the higher classes is the ignorance of the mothers. Domestic hygiene is a sealed book for them. Their habits are not quite sanitary. [515]

There are no venomous snakes.

There is a hospital very near the village. But the chief medical help is from the native doctors who practise privately. There are two great medical experts in the native system but there are also a large number of quacks. The experts have a tremendous business but the quacks do some injury too. 759

Wearing unclean * cloths, not keeping the house neat, using the same plate for food for the whole family, are some of the insanitary habits of the poor and the lower classes. But the higher classes are very neat and Malabar is famous for its neatness. People bathe every day. 515

* [I.e., unclean according to the Malabar standard of cleanliness, which is very high. —Ed.]